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ABSTRACT

In 1981, each of the 30 State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges collected follow-up data on its 1980 graduates, using varying survey instruments. Overall findings, based on a statewide response rate of 72%, included the following: (1) 90.2% of the respondents had either transferred to a four-year college or found employment; (2) of the remaining respondents, over half were not seeking employment; (3) 59% of the respondents with an associate in arts (AA) degree and 58% of the respondents with an associate in science (AS) degree transferred successfully to a four-year institution; (4) 34.9% of the AA respondents and 41% of the AS respondents went to work directly after graduation; (5) 29.9% of the respondents with associate in applied science (AAS) degrees transferred and 57.8% obtained immediate employment; (6) 21.9% of those with associate in occupational science (AOS) degrees transferred and 68% obtained employment; (7) nearly 26% of the certificate program respondents transferred, with 58.1% attaining employment; and (8) 90.7% of the diploma graduates obtained immediate employment. The study report includes findings, based on data from selected schools, with respect to salaries, employers, relationship of job to field of training, geographic mobility of respondents, and jobs with high placement potential. (KL)

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SUNY Community College Graduates: Their Futures

VC 820 519

Analysis Paper No. 822
State University of New York
Office for Community Colleges
June, 1982

SUNY Community College Graduates: Their Futures

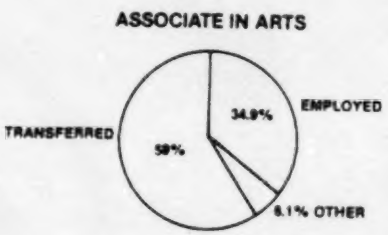
The first-ever statewide collection of data on the success of the graduates of State University of New York community colleges indicates that the great majority of graduates either transfer easily to a four-year college or achieve occupational objectives.

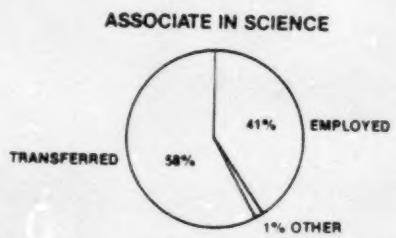
The SUNY Office for Community Colleges, as part of its annual requirement of Full Opportunity ("open admissions") reports from the thirty colleges, asked for and received the comprehensive statistics on the placement, either in four-year colleges or vocations, on the Class of 1980.

A total of 90.2 percent of the graduates of degree and certificate programs who responded to campus surveys either achieved successful transfer to another college or were employed. Campus data also indicates that of the nearly ten percent not in college or on the job, more than half of those people are not seeking employment as a result of individual decisions. This information strongly implies that the unemployment rate for community college graduates, even in this most recent class, is well below the national and statewide averages for the general population.

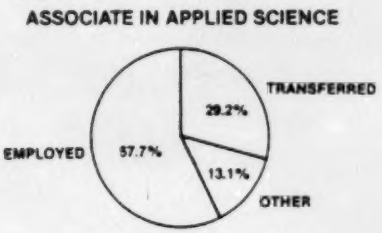
Each college surveyed its 1980 graduates during 1981 and achieved an overall response rate to questionnaires of 72 percent, well above the percentage necessary for valuable statistics. More than 17,000 community college graduates indicated their status.

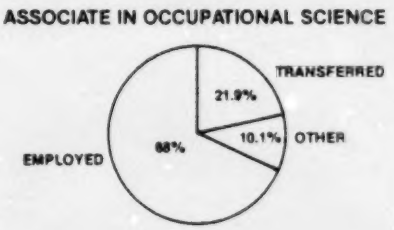
As might be expected, a majority of graduates of transfer programs, those that are designed to lead to Bachelor's degrees (Associate in Arts, Associate in Science), did transfer successfully. A sizeable percentage, however, did go directly to work. The following charts show that 59 percent of A.A. respondees (2413 responses) and 58 percent of the A.S. respondees (3150 responses) transferred successfully to a four-year institution, with 34.9 percent of A.A. graduates (842) and 41 percent of A.S. graduates (1295) going directly to jobs. Ninety-four percent of Associate in Arts and 99.6 percent of Associate in Science graduates are either in college or on the job.



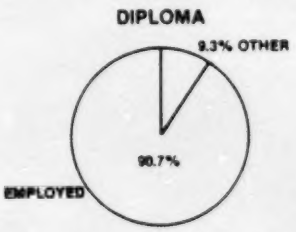


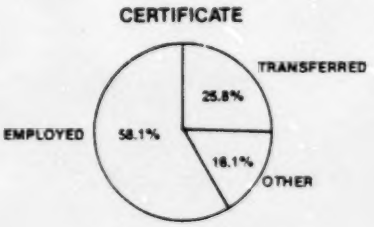
In the category of two-year degrees designed to lead to employment, the figures are pretty much reversed, with 29.2 percent of Associate in Applied Science graduates transferring and 57.8 percent working, while 21.9 percent of Associate in Occupational Science alumni are in college and 68 percent employed. Collectively, 86.9 percent of the A.A.S. graduates achieved either successful transfer or employment with 89.8 percent of the A.O.S. graduates accomplishing similar goals. The charts below indicate that breakdown.



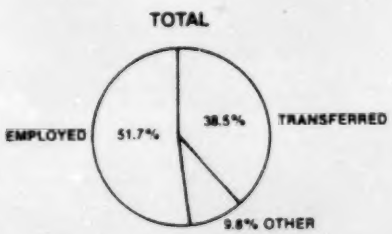


Diploma and certificate (less than two years study) program graduates indicated similar success after college. Diploma graduates, normally completers of very brief vocationally-oriented programs, did not transfer (not one statewide) but 90.7 percent were hired for employment. Nearly 26 percent of the certificate program (usually a year in length) graduates transferred, with 58.1 percent being gainfully employed, for a total of 83.8 percent either in college or on the job.





As a total (all community college graduates), 38.5 percent successfully transferred and 51.7 percent were employed, for the total of 90.2 percent referred to above.



A startingly low percentage of graduates are unemployed and available for work according to those colleges which collect such data. These colleges normally ask more in-depth questions of graduates concerning their current status and thus ascertain if individuals may have chosen to travel, stay at home to begin a family and the like. The figures may be viewed as the unemployment rate of graduates, an indirect equivalent to the unemployment rate of the population--those who want to work and have not yet been hired. Herkimer Community College reported that 4 percent of its graduates were in this category. Mohawk Valley and Hudson Valley each found 2 percent in the category. Schenectady reported 3 percent. Westchester indicated that 1.2 percent were available for employment, but not in the workplace. Only Monroe Community College, of those who collect such statistics, reported differing data, with a figure of 5 percent in 1978, dropping a bit to 4 percent in 1979, but rising to 8 percent in 1980 and 9 percent in 1981.

Most community colleges gather information on job placement and salaries of those graduates who go directly to work. As might be expected, of those colleges who monitor placement by employer, the largest employers of community college graduates are local businesses, industries and agencies who hire graduates with the skills required for the available jobs. This is natural, as community college programs are designed (and approved by the State University of New York) in accordance with the needs of local employers.

For example, the businesses in the Binghamton area hire hundreds of Broome Community College graduates annually. Those firms hiring the most Broome graduates reads like a "who's who" of industry: IBM, Eastman Kodak, General Electric, Singer Company, New York State Gas and Electric, Savin Engineering and Manufacturing Division, GAF, Endicott-Johnson, Smith-Corona and Bendix Corporation. The average starting salary for a Broome graduate is $12,817.

The situation is similar elsewhere in the State. Corning Glass hires more Corning Community College graduates (28 in 1980) than any other firm. Corning graduates (all) received an average starting salary of $11,897. Ninety-five percent of the employed graduates of Monroe Community College work in Monroe County. From the Class of 1980, 76 graduates work at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, 101 in local hospitals and health organizations, 22 with local doctors or dentists, and 14 with the Xerox Corporation.

Salary information, of course, varies according to programs, with graduates of technical programs being more likely to be hired at higher initial salaries. For instance, of the 142 Business

Administration graduates of Erie North Community College, the average annual starting salary is $9120. The average starting salary for the 29 Management Engineering Technology graduates from the same campus is $16,116. The overall campus average is between $11,000 and $12,000.

Similar figures were reported by Mohawk Valley Community College in Utica. Secretarial Science graduates had an average starting salary of $7530, while Advertising graduates earned $8000. But students in Electrical Technology start at an average of $15,250; Drafting Technology at $15,000; Science Laboratory Technology at $17,050; and Mechanical Technology at $14,900. Mohawk Valley also reported that the number of on-campus interviews by prospective employers has soared in recent years, with 157 such visits in 1976 growing to 421 by 1980.

Some examples of average starting salaries from Monroe Community College point to similar trends: Human Services, $8320; Criminal Justice, $13,300; Accounting $13,500; Electrical Technology, $16,664; and Chemical Technology, $17,000. The highest average beginning salaries went to Monroe Community College graduates of Industrial Instrumentation Technology and Optical Engineering Technology. A total of 54 graduates of these programs earn an average of $17,600.

Schenectady reported an average starting salary of $11,970 for A.A.S. graduates, with lows of $9022 and $9098 for graduates of Accounting and Human Services, respectively, and highs of $16,516 for Nondestructive Testing Technology graduates and $16,865 for Management Engineering Technology graduates.

Where such information is gathered, it is clear that working graduates normally are employed in a field related to their degree or certificate program. Eighty-five percent of Ulster County Community College's graduates reported that they work in jobs for which they were trained. The figure is 80.1 percent at Westchester Community College, with a total of 95 percent of all WCC graduates employed reporting satisfaction with the job.

Information on graduates who transferred to four-year colleges also varied by college, but it appears that SUNY's policy of guaranteeing junior status in comparable programs to community college graduates is beginning to be successful.

For example, 64 percent of Broome Community College graduates who transferred went to SUNY colleges and universities. Sixty-five percent of Herkimer County Community College transfers went to SUNY units. At Broome, there also appears to be a trend toward more

graduates transferring (33 percent in 1977, 41 percent in 1980) and fewer going directly to employment (the 48 percent figure in 1980 being the lowest in three years).

Although community college graduates are liable to transfer to just about any public or private college in or outside of New York, the majority do stay in state and large numbers transfer to institutions near their community colleges and near home. For example, the five most popular colleges for Monroe Community College graduates are all in the Rochester area: Rochester Institute of Technology, SUNY College at Brockport, Nazareth College, SUNY College at Geneseo, and St. John Fisher College.

National studies have indicated for some time that community college transfer students usually do as well if not better academically than native students on four-year college campuses. Although such data is not collected generally in SUNY, a five-year follow-up of graduates of Herkimer County Community College seems in line with this belief. The mean average for HCCC students at the Bachelor's degree-granting institutions was 3.04, above the average for all students and native students. The same transfer students had a mean average of 2.95 at Herkimer.

Having determined--even generally--what happened to graduates, we should turn our thoughts to "how" it happened. Being the beneficiary of quality programs is one matter and knowing how, when and where to market what was learned is yet another matter. Obviously much credit must go to faculty, counselors, placement officers, and curricular advisory committees, to name just a few who are involved in the entire teaching/counseling/advising procedure. Special consideration must be given to the many program advisory committees/councils who advise departments/divisions of the ever-changing world of business and industry. The college faculty and administration translate this input into classroom instruction, making the various programs relevant with the times.

Other activities relating to the "how" include stepped-up activities in the area of services to students relating to career development and awareness, preparing for interviews, information on filling out resumes, and the like. Putting the best foot forward has always been good advice but is even more critical in the current job market arena.

Finally, some colleges report continued success with field trips to provide the students a firsthand look at what various careers are all about. The flip side of that activity is the On-Campus Recruiting Program (job fairs) whereby representatives

from various firms, agencies and the military visit community college campuses for the purpose of attracting students to their particular firm or organization. Given the current job market, one could only speculate about the amount of effort and resources companies will be willing to extend to this on-campus recruiting activity.

As with any such report, one wonders what the data would have looked like had the economy been somewhat different. Many colleges indicated that where the job market presented few opportunities, students simply elected to either continue their education in a four-year institution, take any position so they would at least have an income and, in a few cases, simply wait it out.

Although the data received from the colleges could at best only be summarized, some of the information permits the generalization that such areas as computer science, data processing, food services, health sciences and certain business programs and technologies continue to offer high job placement potential. Conversely, students majoring in human services, fire science, criminal justice, recreational leadership and certain business and technical programs fared less well. Naturally, there were exceptions in almost every case.

One difficulty in attempting to analyze the transfer and employment data received from the campuses is that no two campuses used the same survey instrument. Some campuses used highly sophisticated survey instruments, while others only seek to determine whether a student is working or has transferred to another college. Anyone not in one of those two categories is placed in a third category known as "other." Despite campus differences in surveying students and reporting results, it can be said with certainty that some very positive things happen to students as the result of their community college experiences.

SUNY Community College

Graduate Transfer and Placement Data

Class of 1980

Degree	Number of Awards	Number of Students Reporting	Number of Students Transferred	Number of Students Employed	Other*
A.A.	2,986	2,413	1,425	842	324
A.S.	3,628	3,150	1,841	1,295	224
A.A.S.	13,363	11,020	3,213	6,368	1,831
A.O.S.	133	128	28	87	13
Diploma	102	43	--	39	63
Certificate	3,621	427	110	248	128
TOTALS	23,833	17,181	6,617	8,879	2,603

(6,617 + 8,879) ÷ 17,181 = 90.1%

*"Other" reported as being incarcerated, in the military, decided to become a mother and/or a housewife, travel, unemployed, or no explanation.

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